

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08 AID-05 IGA-02
MCE-00 IO-13 DOE-11 SOE-02 /115 W
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R 021420Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9257
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1071
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 0976

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, BL
SUBJECT: ARMS LIMITATION UNDER AYACUCHO DECLARATION

REF: STATE 15196

1. TO THE EXTENT THAT BOLIVIANS THINK AT ALL OF THE AYACUCHO DECLARATION THESE DAYS, THEY THINK OF IT AS INEFFECTIVE. IT HAS NOT PREVENTED SUBSTANTIAL ARMS PURCHASES BY PERU, CHILE AND ECUADOR, NOR DO THEY SEE IT AS LIKELY TO HAVE MUCH FUTURE INFLUENCE ON THE ARMS POLICIES OF THESE NEARBY STATES. BOLIVIANS ORIGINALLY WERE VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT AYACUCHO BECAUSE IT CALLED ATTENTION TO BOLIVIA'S LANDLOCKED STATUS, BUT THAT SUBJECT TOO HAS LOST STATUS WITH THE STANDSTILL OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH PERU AND CHILE ON BOLIVIA'S OUTLET TO THE SEA ASPIRATIONS. THE GOB IS NOW PREOCCUPIED WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL AFFAIRS RELATED TO ITS EFFORT TO HOLD NATIONAL
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ELECTIONS IN JULY 1978. EVEN THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE, WHICH HEATED UP DURING LATE 1976 AND EARLY 1977, HAS BEEN OF LESS CONCERN TO GOB OFFICIALS IN RECENT MONTHS.

2. NEVERTHELESS, MANY BOLIVIANS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT BANZER, FEAR THAT PERU AND CHILE ARE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN HOSTILITIES

DURING THE PERIOD OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC AND THAT BOLIVIA'S TERRITORY PROBABLY WOULD BE VIOLATED IN SUCH A WAR, THEREFORE, THE GOB WOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY TO PRACTICAL INITIATIVES TO LIMIT ARMS PURCHASING IN THE REGION. UP TO NOW PRESIDENT BANZER HAS STRONGLY MAINTAINED A POLICY OF AVOIDING SUBSTANTIAL ARMS BUYING. WE BELIEVE HE WILL CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL MEASURES AS A DEFENSE AGAINST BOLIVIA'S BECOMING A VICTIM OF WAR BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT PRESIDENT BANZER'S REGIME WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVE TO RECONVENE THE AYACUCHO SIGNATORIES OR TO CALL FOR ANY OTHER REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL MEETING FOR SEVERAL REASONS: A) THE GOB IS OCCUPIED WITH ITS INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION. FOR THIS REASON IT DECIDED NOT TO HOST THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN 1978 AND WE DOUBT IT WOULD WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH AN ARMS CONTROL MEETING, IF NOTHING ELSE BECAUSE OF ITS VERY LIMITED ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITIES. AS PART OF BANZER'S SHUFFLING OF THE MILITARY IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIS ELECTION PLANS, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS GOING THROUGH A MAJOR CHANGE OF PERSONNEL AND WILL NOT BE SETTLED DOWN FOR MANY MONTHS TO COME; B) AS A WEAK AND DEPENDENT NATION WHICH HAS SUFFERED THE ENCROACHMENT OF ALL ITS NEIGHBORS, BOLIVIA IS A FOLLOWER AND NOT A LEADER. WE DOUBT THE GOB HAS THE CONFIDENCE AT THIS TIME TO TAKE A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE.

3. WITH REGARD TO PARTICIPATION BY NON-SIGNATORIES, THE MAJOR
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OF THESE IS BRAZIL. BOLIVIA'S MAIN CONCERN IS WITH A PERU/CHILE CONFLICT, PARTICIPATION BY BRAZIL WOULD CONTRIBUTE LITTLE TO REDUCING TENSIONS BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES. ALSO, THE GOB IS SENSITIVE TO CHARGES THAT IT IS OVERLY INFLUENCED BY BRAZIL. THEREFORE, WHILE BOLIVIA WOULD PROBABLY NOT OBJECT TO BRAZILIAN PARTICIPATION IN A NEW MEETING, IT WOULD NOT BE A VOCAL PROPONENT OF INCLUDING THE BRAZILIANS EITHER.

4. AS PART OF ITS STRATEGY TO AVOID BEING CAUGHT IN A PERU/CHILE CONFLICT, BOLIVIA SOUGHT AND OBTAINED A SEAT ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL FOR THE 1978-79 PERIOD. WHILE THE GOB UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD COOPERATE WITH AN ARMS CONTROL EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE OAS, SELA OR ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION, WE BELIEVE THAT IF THE GOB DID DECIDE TO PLAY MORE THAN A PASSIVE ROLE IN REGIONAL ARMS LIMITATION EFFORTS, IT MIGHT WELL DECIDE TO DO THIS IN THE UNITED NATIONS. IN THAT RESPECT, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT MENTIONED THE SUBJECT TO GOB OFFICIALS, BOLIVIA WOULD PROBABLY BE SUPPORTIVE OF EFFORTS IN THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT TO RESTRAIN CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS IN LATIN AMERICA.

5. THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT OFTEN LOOKS TO THE US FOR LEADER-

SHIP AND FROM TIME TO TIME GOB OFFICIALS EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT THE USG WOULD PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING IN THE SOUTHERN CONE. WE THINK BOLIVIA WOULD WELCOME US EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR THE OBJECTIVES OF THE AYACUCHO DECLARATION AS WELL AS US POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT, AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME, FOR A BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO THE SEA AS A MEANS OF REDUCING TENSIONS IN THE REGION.

6. WHILE THE CURRENT BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT IS OCCUPIED WITH ITS ELECTION PLANS AND PROBLEMS, THE NEW GOVERNMENT EXPECTED TO TAKE OFFICE IN AUGUST 1978, WOULD PROBABLY BE MUCH MORE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A RENEWED REGIONAL EFFORT TO ACHIEVE REAL ARMS RESTRAINTS OR REDUCTIONS.

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